Claims

Having thus described the invention, what is claimed as new and desired to be secured by Letters Patent is as follows:

1. A method for electronically redeeming consumer-selected coupons, comprising:

electronically storing coupon data on a portable coupon card, said coupon data including a plurality of coupons selected by a consumer, an expiration date for redemption of said consumer-selected coupons, a plurality of redemption numbers representing the number of times respective consumer-selected coupons may be redeemed prior to said expiration date;

providing said portable coupon card to said consumer;

electronically scanning a bar code associated with a product selected by said consumer to derive a price and inventory information related to said product;

electronically scanning said portable coupon card of said consumer so as to read said coupon data stored thereon;

reducing said price associated with said selected product based on said coupon data stored on said portable coupon card.

2. The method as in claim 1 wherein said plurality of consumer-selected coupons are selected from an on-line library of available coupons.

1   3. The method as in claim 2 wherein reducing said price

2 includes reducing said price if a respective redemption number

3 is greater than zero and said predetermined expiration date is

4 later than a present date.

1   4. The method as in claim 1 wherein providing said

2 portable coupon card to said consumer includes dispensing said

3 portable coupon card from a point-of-purchase machine.

1   5. The method as in claim 1 wherein providing said

2 portable coupon card to said consumer includes mailing said

3 portable coupon card to said consumer.

1   6. The method as in claim 1 further comprising

2 establishing a connection utilizing a computer network between

3 a remote computer of a consumer and a host computer for

4 electronically selecting coupon data offered at said host

5 computer.

1   7. The method as in claim 1 further comprising

2 receiving a payment from said consumer for said portable coupon

3 card following the step of storing said consumer-selected

4 coupon data thereon.

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1   8. A coupon processing system, comprising:

2   a first database of coupon card accounts associated with a

3   plurality of portable coupon cards, each account

4   including a personal identification number associated

5   with a particular consumer, data representing a

6   plurality of consumer-selected coupons, an expiration

7   date for redemption of said consumer-selected coupons,

8   a plurality of redemption numbers representing the

9   number of times respective coupons may be redeemed

10   prior to said expiration date, and a consumer-selected

11   vendor name;

12   means for storing respective account data on a respective

13   portable coupon card;

14   a host computer connected to said first database and

15   connected to a computer network;

16   a vendor computer connected to said computer network and

17   adapted to communicate with said host computer for

18   receiving account data of a particular account for

19   which said consumer-selected vendor name is associated

20   with said vendor computer;

21   a second database of information related to a plurality of

22   vendor products, said vendor product information

23   including at least a price and inventory information

24   related to each vendor product;

25   wherein said vendor computer is electronically connected to

26   said second database;

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27   means electrically connected to said vendor computer for

28   reading said account data stored on said respective

29   portable coupon card; and

30   means electrically connected to said vendor computer for

31   identifying a particular vendor product selected by a

32   consumer for purchase, said vendor computer adapted to

33   modify said inventory information in said second

34   database based on a sale of said particular product and

35   to calculate a final purchase price of said particular

36   product based on said account data read from said

37   respective portable coupon card.

1   9. The coupon processing system as in claim 8 wherein

2   said vendor computer is adapted to transmit coupons redeemed

3   electronically by consumers to said host computer utilizing

4   said computer network for redemption thereof with the issuer of

5   said coupons.

1   10. The coupon processing system as in claim 8 wherein

2   said host computer is adapted to receive a request from a

3   remote computer connected to the computer network for

4   establishing a new coupon card account in said first database,

5   said host computer adapted to transmit signals for eliciting

6   predetermined demographic information from a new user at said

7   remote computer and prompting said new user to choose a new

8   plurality of consumer-selected coupons from a library of on-

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9 line coupons, said host computer adapted to assign a new

10 personal identification number to a new record and store said

11 demographic data and new plurality of consumer-selected coupons

12 in said new record in said first database.

1   11. The coupon processing system as in claim 8 wherein

2 said vendor computer is adapted to retrieve a respective price

3 from said second database associated with a particular product

4 identified by said identifying means and to reduce said

5 respective price by an amount equal to a respective coupon

6 identified by said reading means if a respective redemption

7 number is greater than zero and said expiration date is later

8 than a present date.

1   12. The coupon processing system as in claim 11 wherein

2 said vendor computer is adapted to reduce said respective

3 redemption number by one if said respective coupon is redeemed.

1   13. The coupon processing system as in claim 8 wherein

2 said identifying means is a bar code reader.

14. A transaction instrument, comprising:

a generally rectangular card having an alphanumeric identification code imprinted on a first side thereof and a plurality of product identifiers imprinted on said first side, said plurality of product identifiers representing a plurality of consumer-selected coupons; and

a magnetic strip on a second side of said card, said magnetic strip adapted to store data representing at least said plurality of consumer-selected coupons and said personal identification number.

15. A transaction instrument as in claim 14 wherein each product identifier includes a name of a respective company, a respective product or brand name, and a quantity indicator if more than one quantity is offered by said company.

16. A transaction instrument as in claim 14 wherein said strip is adapted to store data representing an expiration date for redemption of said consumer-selected coupons, a plurality of redemption numbers representing the number of times respective coupons may be redeemed prior to said expiration date, and a consumer-selected vendor name.

1   17. The transaction instrument as in claim 14 wherein

2   said card is dispensed by an ATM machine upon pre-payment of a

3   monetary amount based on a value of said consumer-selected

4   coupons.